

Pakistan coast, and the fact that the Great Knot must fly in a southwesterly direction to reach Pakistan from its breeding grounds, would lead one to expect that it might well reach the Arabian Peninsula at least occasionally. A recent sight record as far west as Morocco on 27 Aug 1980 (Lister 1981) lends support to this expectation. Further, a flock of 70 Great Knots that B.F.K. observed near Karachi on 11 Mar 1981 had not been observed there previously that winter, suggesting that they had wintered farther south. The fact that the Great Knot has occurred as far south as southern Australia and Tasmania (Condon 1975), also suggests the possibility of its occurrence in winter to the south of Oman, on the east African coast. On migration and in winter, B.F.K. has usually found it on coastal mud-flats and sand-flats, including tidal creeks.

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Reappraisal of variation in the nightjar *Caprimulgus natalensis* Smith

by R. M. Harwin

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Huxley (1964) listed the Caprimulgiformes as an order in which polymorphism was absent, evidently overlooking its occurrence in *Caprimulgus donaldsoni*, which had already been documented by Mackworth-Praed & Grant (1952). More recently, Benson & Colebrook-Robjent (1977) have shown that it occurs in *Caprimulgus pectoralis*, and in the course of preparing the section on the Caprimulgidae for Volume 3 of *The Birds of Africa* (Urban

et al. in press), I came to the conclusion that the grey forms of *C. natalensis* are better considered as colour-morphs rather than as distinct subspecies. Of these forms, White (1965) remarked "Geographical variation is not fully understood, very similar reddish populations having a wide, broken range, with greyer populations intervening".

C. natalensis is a small, distinctively marked, short-tailed nightjar with robust legs and feet, inhabiting short, moist grasslands from Liberia to Kenya and thence south to Natal. The colour-pattern consists of large black or brown spots on a rufous-buff or greyish ground. It is variously known as the White-tailed or Natal Nightjar, neither name being particularly appropriate. White in the tail is limited to the 2 outer pairs of rectrices and the undertail coverts, while the Natal population is an isolated one, whose habitat has, in any case, been very largely destroyed by sugar cane culture. Cyrus & Robson's recent "Bird Atlas of Natal" (1980) shows it surviving only in Zululand and the extreme south of Natal; however, it almost certainly extends to southern Mozambique—probably even further up the Mozambique coast. I suggest a more appropriate name is "Swamp Nightjar", referring to its chosen habitat.

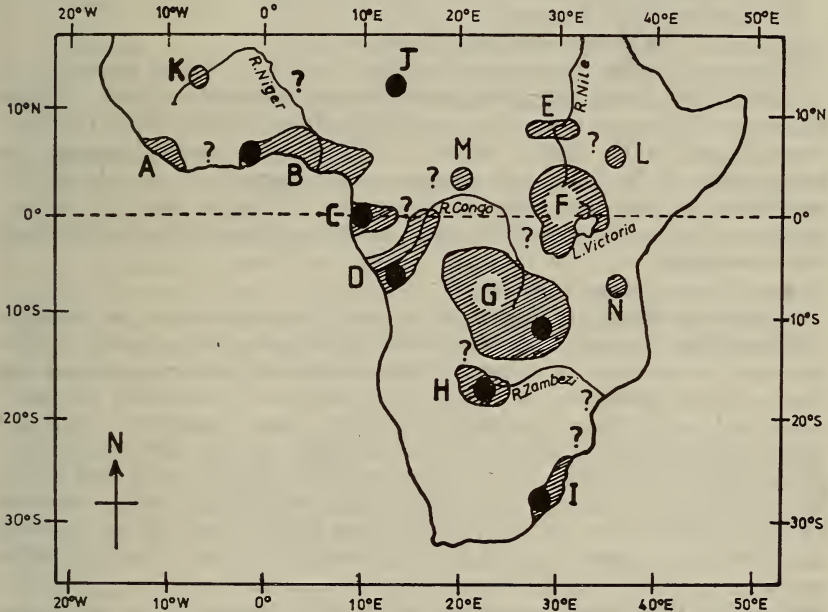


Fig. 1. Sketch map showing distribution of *Caprimulgus natalensis* and the areas inhabited by populations A to N (see text and Table 1). Circles represent isolated localities. Blacked in circles indicate the type-localities of 7 described subspecies, question marks possible but unproved occurrence. Adapted with permission from *The Birds of Africa*. Vol. 3 (Urban *et al.* in press).

The range of the species as a whole is much broken up, and it is perhaps not surprising that 7 subspecies should have been described. A study of the distribution map in Snow (1978) shows that there could be as many as 14

discrete populations (5 known from a single locality and 7 having received subspecific names) as follows (Fig. 1):—

- A. Liberia.
- B. Southeast Ghana, coastal Togo and Benin, southern Nigeria and West Cameroon (“*C. n. accrae* Shelley”).
- C. Gabon (“*C. n. gabonensis* Alexander”).
- D. Savannas along lower reaches of the Congo River (“*C. n. fulviventris* Hartlaub”).
- E. Bahr-el-Ghazal, Sudan; separated from F by the Sudd.
- F. Region around Lake Victoria and upper Nile (Uganda, Rwanda and adjacent parts of Sudan, Zaire, Kenya, Tanzania and Burundi).
- G. Southern Zaire and northern Zambia (“*C. n. mpasa* Smithers”).
- H. Caprivi Strip, northern Botswana and extreme southwestern Zambia (“*C. n. carpi* Smithers”).
- I. Coastal Natal and southern Mozambique (“*C. n. natalensis* Smith”).
- J. Lake Chad (“*C. n. chadensis* Alexander”).
- K. Upper Niger, Mali.
- L. Southwestern Ethiopia.
- M. Bend of the River Oubangi, northern Zaire.
- N. Southwestern Tanzania.

Populations J to N represent single localities.

I have examined 80 specimens of *natalensis* (35 ♂♂, 44 ♀♀ and 1 unsexed) in the collections of the British Museum (Natural History) and the National Museum of Zimbabwe, and this paper attempts an explanation of the treatment adopted in *The Birds of Africa*. It will be appreciated, of course, that 80 specimens is by no means a large sample, particularly considering the number of populations involved. Nevertheless, I believe that only 2 subspecies are recognisable, and the grey populations are nothing but localised colour-morphs.

VARIATION IN GROUND COLOUR

I agree with White (1965), who, in uniting *C. n. chadensis* and *C. n. gabonensis* with nominate *C. n. natalensis*, stated “I doubt whether the included populations can be separated on colour”. White might well have gone further and also included *fulviventris*, of which he commented “doubtfully distinct”, *mpasa* and *carpi*. When describing the latter 2 taxa, Smithers (1954a and 1954b) compared them with nominate *natalensis*, but not with the populations of Zaire and Uganda. I have only examined 2 specimens of *carpi*, which are, as Smithers claimed, of the very grey form. M. P. Stuart Irwin, however, informs me that some years ago he examined 3 males collected on behalf of the Smithsonian Institution at Xugana in Botswana, about 250 km SW of the type locality of *carpi*, and observed that all were sandy coloured. Both the *carpi* which I examined were also males, while 13 out of 17 *mpasa* were females. One cannot, therefore, discount the possibility of sexual differences in these variable populations. Until a fuller examination of all populations from the Upper Nile to Ngamiland is undertaken, only one trinomial should be applied. All are probably best included with nominate *natalensis*. If distinct from the Natal population, the earliest name is *C. p. fulviventris* Hartlaub.

C. n. accrae of coastal West Africa is darker and duller and is the only subspecies clearly separable from nominate *C. n. natalensis* on colour.

VARIATION IN SIZE

Sex difference

Published figures (Chapin 1939, Mackworth-Praed & Grant 1952, 1962, 1970, White 1965) do not differentiate between the sizes of males and females, implying that there is no significant difference. My own measurements showed that the wing-lengths of 35 males varied between 148 and 162 mm (mean 156.2), and of 44 females between 145 and 167 mm (mean 153.8). In Table 1 therefore, I have likewise not distinguished between the wing-lengths of the two sexes.

TABLE 1

Wing measurements of populations A to J of *Caprimulgus natalensis* (see text)

Pop- ulation	Putative subspecies	No.	Range	Mean	Wing-lengths as given by		
					Chapin (1939)	M.-P. & G. (1952, '62, '70)	White (1965)
A/B	<i>accrae</i>	7	148-155	150.7	146-154	146-150	146-154
C	<i>gabonensis</i>	1	149	149	138-147	137-144	138-152
D	<i>fulviventris</i>	—	—	—	154	154	—
E	<i>chadensis</i>	15	146-162	154.9	147-159*	146-166*	147-163*
F	<i>chadensis</i>	22	146-161	153.0	147-159*	146-166*	147-163*
G	<i>mpasa</i>	17	148-167	159.4	—	156-167	156-167
H	<i>carpi</i>	2	149-164	156.5	—	155-166	—
I	<i>natalensis</i>	10	145-162	155.3	149-163	150-167	147-163*
J	<i>chadensis</i>	5	145-159	151.4	147-159*	146-166*	147-163*

*Chapin, Mackworth-Praed & Grant included populations E, F and J under the name *chadensis*. White included them under *natalensis*.

Geographical difference

Table 1 shows the range of my measurements, compared with those given by Chapin, Mackworth-Praed & Grant, and White (some of which may have been repeated from an earlier author). It will be seen that there is general agreement, apart from Population C, of which I examined only one specimen. It is possible that the latter population, "*C. n. gabonensis*", may be separable on account of smaller size, as is the Gabon population of *C. fossii*, but on the basis of one specimen which appears to be at the upper limit of the species range, I cannot express an opinion.

CONCLUSION

In the present state of knowledge, it is advisable to admit only the 2 subspecies of *Caprimulgus natalensis*, *accrae* of coastal West Africa, with nominate *natalensis* occupying the remainder of the range of the species. The Gabon population may represent a small subspecies, but other subspecies named heretofore are based on colour-morphs.

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The spelling of *Semioptera wallacii* (Paradisacidae)

by Mary LeCroy

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I believe that some comment on McAlpine's (1979) article on the spelling of several names in the family Paradisacidae is in order. He proposes to use the spelling *Semeioptera wallacei*; this spelling was used in the *Literary Gazette* report concerning the meeting of the Zoological Society of London at which Gray proposed both the name *Semioptera* as the subgeneric name and *wallacii* as the specific name of Wallace's Standard-wing Bird of Paradise. This *Literary Gazette* was published (March 1859) before the *Proceedings* of the meeting in question (June 1859) and contained a description of the bird. To further complicate matters a report on the meeting also appeared in *Ibis* (April 1859: 210) before the *Proceedings* were published but in which the *Literary Gazette* article was quoted.

I have not seen the original *Literary Gazette* article, but McAlpine says that the spelling there was *Semeioptera* for the subgenus (later elevated to generic rank) and *Wallacei* for the species. In the *Ibis* article, within the quotation from the *Literary Gazette*, the name is spelled *Semioptera* for the subgenus and *wallacii* for the species, as it is in the rest of the *Ibis* article itself. In the *Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London*, published in June 1859, Gray spelled the name as *Semioptera* for the subgenus and *wallacii* for the species. Gray obviously intended the spelling to be *Semioptera wallacii*, and I consider the spelling in the *Literary Gazette* a misspelling. Nevertheless, as McAlpine says, there was included a recognizable description of the bird. However, as far as I have been able to determine, the spelling *Semeioptera* has never been used in the literature in over 120 years and, as *Wallacei* is only a variant spelling of Wallace's name, I am petitioning the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature to suppress the names *Semeioptera* and *Wallacei* in reference to Wallace's Standard-wing Bird of Paradise and to conserve, in the interest of nomenclatural stability, the spelling *Semioptera wallacii*, which I believe was Gray's intended spelling.

I would also like to point out that while the citation for the description of